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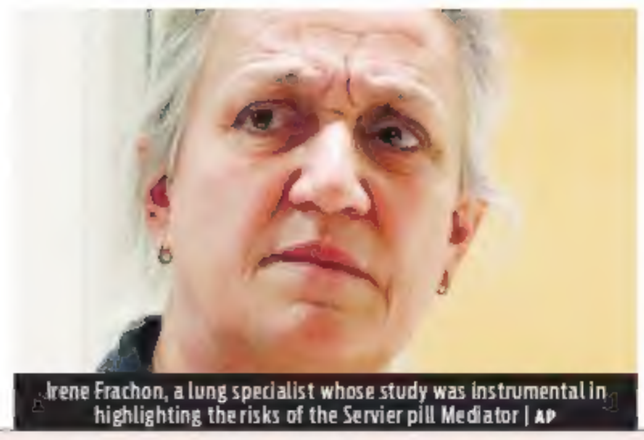
Irene Frachon, a lung specialist whose study was instrumental in highlighting the risks of the Servier pill Mediator | AP

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FRENCH PHARMA MAJOR GUILTY OF INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER

Court convicts Servier for deaths caused by Mediator, a drug used for diabetes, weightloss treatment between 1976-2009

DAMAGED HEART VALVES, KILLED AT LEAST 500

In 1999, a study linked the pill with damage of heart valves but Servier continued to push the product till 2009 before pulling it out. A French court said the firm misled consumers on the pill for decades, despite being aware of its side-effects. Experts testified that about 500 people have died due to the drug and the number may exceed 2,100 deaths eventually

BANNED BY U.S, SPAIN & ITALY BEFORE 2009

- France's medicines agency ANSM was fined 303,000 euros for delay in action, despite repeated warnings over its side effects
- Servier's former deputy boss sentenced to a suspended jail sentence of four years and fined several million euros in damages
- Mediator was used by 50 lakh people across the world till 2009 |P11

$350 mn
SETTLED OUT OF COURT BETWEEN PATIENTS, INSURANCE FIRMS AND THE PHARMA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

BSY: No lockdown, rallies banned for 15 days in state

8 BBMP zones to get an IAS officer each to monitor Covid situation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

DESPITE a surge in Covid numbers in the stare, especially in Bengaluru, the Karnataka Government is keen on not stalling normal life. Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday held a meeting with senior ministers and members of the Technical Advisory Committee where it was decided that schools and colleges will remain open in the state. "No lockdown or curfew will be imposed, but all protest rallies and agitations will remain banned for the next 15 days," he said.

Given that Covid cases are increasing at an alarming rate in Bengaluru, the government has appointed an IAS officer each for the eight zones, as zonal in-charges. In the absence of corporators, pending BBMP elections, the IAS officers along with BBMP officials will lead the pandemic management initiatives, apart from vaccination drives in the eight zones.

"The positivity rate in Bengaluru was 0.94 per cent in February, but has increased to 1.94 per cent in March. We have so far administered 6.61 lakh doses of Covid vaccine. It is heartening to know that the number of cases in the slums is less. As cases are more in apartments, we are hoping to start a vaccination targeting these residential complexes," Yediyurappa mentioned.

The State Government has decided not to levy fines yet for not wearing masks, but has appealed to citizens to cooperate in the fight against the pandemic.

The government, however, has decided to go after organisers and convention hall owners where big gatherings are held. "Till now, we were levying fines on families hosting weddings if the number of guests exceeded the Covid protocols. But now, it has been decided to fine venue owners. We will shut down such venues for six months," warned Revenue Minister R Ashoka.

The same aggressiveness, however, vanished when it came to political rallies in view of the upcoming bypolls. "We will appeal to parties to also not violate norms," Yediyurappa said, when asked if political rallies will also be penalised for flouting Covid norms. P2,3

'Only Chief Secy can speak about Covid protocols'

Miffed with his cabinet colleagues issuing different statements over possible Covid-19 restrictions, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday told all ministers and senior officials that any orders related to Covid protocols and restrictions will, henceforth, only be issued by the Chief Secretary after his own approval. P2

STATE GOVERNMENT'S PREPAREDNESS

- Covid Care Centres with **100 beds** at HAL and Haj bhavan
- From **April 5**, Koramangala Indoor Stadium will have a **250-bed** Covid Care Centre
- **2 mobile, 1 static** test teams to be deployed in each ward
- **30 contacts** of each patient to be traced
- **1,166 beds** in govt hospitals of Bengaluru Rural and Urban reserved for Covid treatment
- A sum of **₹150 cr** released for Covid-19 expenditure

Chief Minister Yediyurappa and his cabinet ministers hold a review meeting to assess the prevailing Covid situation, in Bengaluru on Monday | EXPRESS

WHO's report in sync with China's position

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

A joint World Health Organization-China study on the origins of Covid-19 went with Beijing's position on the chances of its leak from a Wuhan lab being extremely unlikely and concluded that the most plausible scenario was its transmission from bats to humans through another animal.

The report put together by an international team of experts and seen by the Associated Press proposed further research in every area except the lab leak hypothesis. But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said all hypotheses on the origins remained open and needed further study.

The report is expected to be made public on Tuesday. "We've got real concerns about the methodology and the process that went into that report, including the fact that the government in Beijing apparently helped to write it," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a recent CNN interview. China hit back accusing the US of trying to pressure the WHO experts' group.

The report listed scenarios in the order of likelihood, starting with transmission from bats to another animal, which it said was likely to very likely. On direct spread from bats to humans, experts saw it as likely; while spreading to humans from the packaging of cold-chain food products was seen as possible, but not likely.

THE VERTICAL CLIMB

68,020 NEW CASES ACROSS INDIA ON MONDAY

40,414 OF CASE LOAD FROM MAHARASHTRA ALONE

Stone mining, crusher units can resume ops: Nirani

REFORMS PROPOSED BY MINES AND GEOLOGY DEPT

- GPS will be installed to monitor vehicle movements
- Safety kits will be provided to miners/ labourers
- Ex-servicemen will be recruited for security positions
- District-level staff to get walkie-talkies
- Master Control room to be set up in the head office

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government has decided to allow resumption of operations of stalled stone mining and crusher units, announced Mines and Geology Minister Murugesh R Nirani, here on Monday. The closure of these units, which was the result of recent accidental blasts at quarries in Shivamogga and Chikkaballapur districts, has resulted in a revenue loss for the state, he pointed out.

Before resuming operations, owners of quarries and stone crushers have to give an undertaking to the authorities, saying they would abide by the rules and regulations and would submit a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Centre's Directorate General of Mines Safety to use explosives safely. The circular has already been issued by the Mines and Geology Department.

Nirani said that after the two recent blasts that claimed the lives of 12 people, almost all the stone quarries and crusher units had stopped operations, leading to an estimated loss of ₹300 crore. "It had also affected construction activities and prices of raw materials had skyrocketed. The resumption will generate employment too," he added.

The state has over 2,500 stone quarries and crushing units. But less than 10 per cent of them have the NOC from DGMS to carry out blasts. The rule is not applicable for use of explosives of less than 2 kg in areas falling within five acres. Nirani said that it is impossible to operate these units without the use of explosives. But it is mandatory to get the NOC, which places tough conditions on owners to purchase, store and use explosives.

International banks lose billions after fire sale of stocks by US fund

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

WALL Street was in turmoil on Monday after two top global banks — Nomura of Japan and Switzerland's Credit Suisse — warned they could face significant losses following their exposure to an unnamed US hedge fund. The fund had defaulted last week on certain margin positions held by them and other banks, they said.

"Following the failure of the fund to meet these margin commitments, Credit Suisse and other banks are in the process of exiting these positions," Credit Suisse said.

While the banks did not name the fund, media houses identified it as Archegos Capital Management, which had liquidated billions in stocks just last week.

Archegos dumped its holdings in top Chinese companies like Baidu Inc, Tencent Music Entertainment Group and Vipshop Holding plus US giants such as ViacomCBS and Discovery after their share value fell last week. This hurt Archegos' bottom line, forcing it to seek fresh funding.

Nomura shares plunged by 16% in Tokyo after it warned of a potential $2 billion loss, while Credit Suisse shed 14%. Investor concerns drove down prices of other European banks, too. Nomura, however, said 'there will be no issues related to the operations or financial soundness'.

Swiss bank silent on quantum

Already hit by the collapse of British short-term corporate loan specialist Greensill earlier this year, Credit Suisse warned its losses could be "highly significant", without giving a figure. The bank referred to links to a US fund which had defaulted on margin calls last week

SUEZ FREE

Tugboat crews sounded foghorns in celebration on Monday after dislodging a ship stuck in Suez Canal for a week

The head of the Suez Canal Authority announced the resumption of shipping traffic in the canal, bringing relief to a tailback of over 425 vessels, which will take 4-5 days to clear

No sooner had the news of Ever Given refloating trickled out than the oil prices started easing. The 190-odd-km canal channels 10% of world trade | P14

Self-defence classes planned for girls at temples

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

IF everything goes according to plan, girls and young women in rural areas will be learning self-defence and other courses at their village temples.

Members of the Karnataka Rajya Dharmika Parishath, who are meeting in Bengaluru on April 9, are expected to recommend to the state government that the temple premises should be used to teach karate, other self-defence and music classes to girls and women in rural parts. The state has over 34,000 temples run by the Endowments Department, of which 175 are categorised as Class A (with an annual income of above ₹25 lakh), 158 as Class B (annual income of ₹5-25 lakh) and the rest as Class C (income of less than ₹5 lakh). This apart, thousands of temples are run by private trusts, organisations and individuals.

Endowments Minister Kota Srinivas Poojary said that sometime back, there was a proposal to introduce the same programme, 'Devalayagalalli Atmasthairya', for girls in villages. "But we could not go ahead because of Covid and lockdown. Now, the proposal has resurfaced. We will discuss it with officials and CM B S Yediyurappa, and take a final decision," he added.

Department sources said, "To begin with, we will look at temples which are doing well financially. We may tie up with NGOs to conduct classes, which will be held in the evenings so that regular classes of school and college-going youngsters are not disturbed. Finances are low with the government, and we may approach private companies for their corporate social responsibility funds or any NGO to run the programme."

They said that they will invoke the village deity to convince elders in the family to send womenfolk for training programmes.

HOSPITAL CARE

Pawar to go under the knife soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mumbai

NCP founder Sharad Pawar will soon undergo surgery at a Mumbai hospital here after it was diagnosed that he has some gall bladder issue, a minister of his party in the state government said here on Monday. He is 80.

"Our party president Sharad Pawar saheb was feeling a little uneasy due to a pain in his abdomen last evening and was therefore taken to Breach Candy Hospital for a check-up. Upon diagnosis it came to light that he has a problem in his Gall Bladder," NCP leader Nawab Malik tweeted.

"He is on Blood Thinning Medication which is now being stopped due to this issue. He will be admitted to the hospital on the 31st of March 2021 and an Endoscopy and Surgery will be conducted. Hence all his programmes stand cancelled until further notice," the minister added.

NCP spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said Pawar had a medical check-up at a private hospital after complaining of abdominal pain on Sunday, while he was in Ahmedabad.

There was intense speculation on Sunday that he had a hush-hush meeting the previous day with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a top industrialist's house in Ahmedabad. While the NCP flatly denied the interaction and blamed it on BJP's spin doctoring, Shah deflected it, saying that not everything is for public consumption.

TESTING TIMES

Postgraduate tribal girl works as farm hand to chase her KAS dream

AJITH M S @ Mysuru

FROM braving conventions to picking up a master's degree in Kannada, despite hailing from the forest fringes and resisting the tribal tradition of early wedlock, 22-year-old tribal girl **Anuradha** is now chasing the dream of becoming a Karnataka Administrative Service (KAS) officer.

But the road ahead is tough as she does not have enough money to fund her coaching classes. Picking the only option, she is now working as a farm hand at the fields to save enough for her training.

Hailing from the Thimmanahosahalli hamlet near DB Kuppe of HD Kote taluk, Anuradha is among rare tribal women who have pursued higher education. She was raised by a single mother, who was widowed at an early age but worked hard to educate her.

Anuradha told *The New Indian Express* that the plight of other tribal girls, who could not pursue education, inspired her to chase the KAS dream.

Though the Social Welfare Department has a Pre-Examination Training Centre (PETC) programme for youth aspiring for competitive exams, like IAS and KAS, she missed applying for it. "This year, the process was completely online and the last date was in December. I got to know about it late and moreover, we were struggling to make our ends meet because of the pandemic," she said.

She approached many private coaching centres, but could not afford the fees. "They ask for over ₹60,000 for coaching, apart from the stay. It is difficult to save money from the wages I get working in the fields, but I have no other option. I have been trying for a better-paying job, but so far nothing has materialised," she said.

It is difficult to save money from the wages I get working in the fields, but I have no other option. I have been trying for a better-paying job, but so far nothing has materialised

Anuradha

Tribal activist Shailendra of Karnataka Aranya Moola Budakattu Samudayakala Okutta said that a tribal girl like Anuradha acquiring a master's degree itself is a big achievement. "She should not be denied help to pursue her dream at any cost. If girls like her from our community emerge as successful officers, it would be liberating and inspiring for other girl children. The authorities should come forward to fund her coaching," he said.

When *TNIE* approached Prakash, the Integrated Tribal Development Programme Coordinator from Tribal Welfare Department, he said the department will take care of her accommodation at a city of her choice, but added that she may not be able to get into the PETC programme since the last date is over.